

News Release



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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National Symbol of Pacific Immigration

U.S. Immigration Station at Angel Island State Park 100th Anniversary Honored with 100 new U.S. Citizens

To commemorate the 100-year anniversary of the Angel Island Immigration Station, California State Parks, the Angel Island Immigration Station Foundation and the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services joined together in San Francisco. They hosted a ceremony that included a photo slideshow of historic photos, comments by dignitaries, recognition to detainees who once lived there and the swearing in of 100 new immigrants who took the Oath of Allegiance to the United States and became U.S. citizens.

"Today, we welcome new citizens as we remember those who struggled to reach America a century ago," said Director Ruth Coleman of California State Parks. "The story of Angel Island is profoundly American and we are proud to tell it - both the good and the bad - to inspire each generation to achieve their dreams."

Also on this day, from the White House, President Barak Obama issued a proclamation in honor of what has become known as the "Ellis Island of the West." The event was held at 10 a.m. on Thursday in the Herbst Theater in San Francisco.

Exactly 100 years ago today, the Angel Island Immigration Station opened its doors and became the West Coast's gateway to America. For the next 30 years, immigrants from 80 countries were processed through its doors, many who left poetry on the dormitory walls. It was the point of entry for most of the approximately 175,000 Chinese immigrants who came to the United States between 1910 -1940. Last year, after a five-year, \$15 million restoration, it reopened to the public. Today it stands as a museum within Angel Island State Park where many visitors come to learn about their family's roots and about California's place in immigration history.

"The enduring story of Angel Island cannot simply be remembered as the ordeal of a few hundred thousand immigrants who braved the 7,000 mile voyage to California," said Buck Gee, president of the Angel Island Immigration Station Foundation. "The story evokes their undying faith in a young country where anything was possible and where millions of their descendants would help stitch the tapestry of a 21st Century America."

(more)

Event Program

Part One: Angel Island Immigration Station Foundation

Welcome by Buck Gee, President of the AIISF Board of Directors

Reading of President Barack Obama's Statement on the 100th anniversary of the U.S. Immigration Station, Angel Island by Larry Crider, Acting District Director of the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services

Reading of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors Resolution on "Angel Island Immigration Station Day" by Supervisor Eric Mar

Remarks by Ruth Coleman, Director of the California State Parks

Reading of Chinese, Japanese and Russian poems by San Francisco Poet Laureates Diane Di Prima, Janice Mirikitani, and Nellie Wong

Closing Remarks by Buck Gee, President of the AIISF Board of Directors

Part Two: United States Citizenship and Immigration Services

Welcome by Larry Crider, Acting District Director of USCIS

Posting of Colors led by the Galileo High School JROTC Color Guard

The National Anthem, sung by Lua Hadar

Presentation of Candidates and Administration of the Oath of Allegiance and Congratulatory Remarks by Larry Crider, Acting District Director USCIS

Outstanding American by Choice Recognition to Dr. Samuel So by Larry Crider, Acting District Director USCIS

Remarks by Dr. Samuel So

The Pledge of Allegiance led by Dr. Samuel So

Retirement of the Colors

Closing Remarks by Larry Crider, Acting District Director, USCIS

Congratulatory Message via video by President Barack Obama

Special Guests in attendance:

Consul Generals:

Bon Woo Koo, Consul General of the Republic of Korea
Carlos Felix Corona, Consul General of Mexico
Yasumasa Nagamine, Consul General of Japan
Steward Beck, Consul General of Canada
Heng Jee See, Singapore Consulate General
Gao Zangshen, Consul General of the People's Republic of China

Background:

Restoration on Angel Island

The Angel Island Immigration Station at Angel Island State Park offers visitors newly created and dramatic displays to provide a sense of what life was like for thousands of men, women and children who were held captive behind barbed wire, barred windows and locked doors for weeks and months. It stands as a testament to the human spirit where tens of thousands began a new life in a new land while thousands of others had their spirits crushed as they were detained.

A five-year, \$15 million restoration of the facility was completed last spring. Visitors are now able to see both floors of the detention barracks and view many exhibits that highlight the story of Pacific immigration. The station offers significant new interpretive panels and storytelling design features to help illustrate the physical conditions that existed when thousands of immigrants learned they were unwanted in a new land. The station's centerpiece is the nearly 200 poems carved into the walls of the barracks. Special lighting has been installed to enhance the viewing experience of these unique testimonials. Most are Chinese, but there are also Japanese, Korean, German and Russian inscriptions.

Work on the renovation continues. It is estimated that \$45 million will be needed to complete the barn, POW Mess Hall and the World War II barracks. The central heating plant near the shoreline will also be restored and converted into a visitor's center for the immigration station. The Angel Island Immigration Station Foundation has been the driving force in fundraising and in gathering support. To learn more, visit <http://www.aiisf.org>.

History

Immigrants were lured to Angel Island by the promise of gold and a better life. Thousands of Chinese began immigrating to the United States in 1848. They began to be seen as cheap labor, displacing jobs for Americans. This led to the Chinese Exclusion Act being passed in 1882. Chinese workers were then forbidden to enter the United States. Many Chinese continued to immigrate as sons and daughters of U.S. citizens, (Chinese born in the U.S.). To prove their legal right to enter, Chinese and eventually other Asian immigrants were detained and questioned at the Angel Island Immigration Station, which opened on January 21, 1910.

Today, the Immigration Station is part of Angel Island State Park and is open to the public for tours Wednesday through Sunday.

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